



PO Box 265  
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February 26, 2008

**RECEIVED**

Travel Management Planning Team  
Bitterroot National Forest  
88 Main  
Stevensville, MT 59870

**FEB 29 2008**

**Ravalli County Commissioners**

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**Additional Comments From Bitterroot Ridgerunners  
Regarding Proposed Wilderness of  
Blodgett Canyon and Chaffin Creek.**

It would seem that the Bitterroot Forest Service's principle objective in the proposed travel plan is to severely curtail motorized use of the Forest. That this purpose seems clear, one need only study the maps proposing closures. The current proposed travel plan challenges motorized users to provide answers as to why a trail should not be closed.

Environmental groups have placed severe pressure on the Forest Service to create more wilderness and/or recommended wilderness study areas so as to restrict multiple use. Some people have gone so far as to set up camp in the top of a tree to prevent cutting it down. Court actions brought by environmental activists augment and support restrictions on logging and other actions.

While it is clear that areas exist where motorized users do not go, environmental interests, in their zeal to 'preserve and protect' the forest, place a great deal of pressure on government agencies to create recommended wilderness and/or study areas. Doing so creates other problems.

Proximity to private land by wilderness makes forest fuel reduction increasingly difficult. Environmental objection to such fuel reduction and a buffer zone between wilderness and private lands creates a correspondingly increased fire hazard.

Recommended Wilderness also restricts access to high country lakes for maintenance and water flow control. High country irrigation lakes have been included in proposed wilderness areas on the winter travel plan. Specifically, Chaffin Lake would be made more inaccessible by extension of proposed wilderness. More critical would the inclusion of High Lake and Blodgett Lake in the proposed Blodgett Canyon wilderness. Such proposal could make access to these irrigation lakes inaccessible by motorized equipment in order to adjust water flow, maintain equipment or repair the dam when required.

Although motorized recreational users do not use the trails leading to Blodgett Lake, High Lake or Chaffin Lake, it is necessary to point out these deficiencies in the travel plan. Other deficiencies also exist. The principle one being lack of substantiated evidence of degradation by over snow travel. The Ridgerunners oppose closing the remaining access that snowmobilers have to high mountain areas. While there may be occasional misuse by summer travel users, managing, rather than eliminating activity is paramount.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bitterroot Ridgerunners Board  
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cc: